EDITORIALS

The Georgetowner newspaper, 6/03

Approve The GU Boathouse

Just when we thought it was safe for Georgetown University to build its boathouse on the Potomac, Washington Canoe Club members and local environmentalists are attempting to stop it. Canoe Club members complain that the building, which will be located next to their 100-year-old boathouse, will be several times larger and five feet taller than theirs. Environmentalists have piled on, claiming that the boathouse will encroach on "wetlands that protect the river and destroy habitat for numerous species."

For more than a decade, Georgetown University has been planning to build a boathouse on the Potomac River for its rowing and sailing teams currently housed at Thompson's Boat Center, a National Park Service facility adjacent to Washington Harbor. The University must share the limited space at Thompson's with George Washington University and with an increasing number of high school rowing teams and individual rowers.

Georgetown University has developed a handsome design for a $15 million boathouse to be built on a one-acre waterfront site above Key Bridge. The Federal Fine Arts Commission, the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board, ANC 2E (Georgetown), the Georgetown Waterfront Park Commission, the C&O National Historical Park Advisory Commission, and the National Capital Planning Commission have all reviewed and approved the project after ample opportunity for public comment. (It's amazing that anything ever gets built here!)

The National Park Service, which accepted one acre of land the University owned on the Potomac Palisades in exchange for the boathouse site, strongly supports the project. In responding to environmentalists' concerns, the Park Service notes that there are no significant wetlands or vegetation on the boathouse site, and that locating a boathouse on the floodplain is permitted under Federal law.

In a final review of the project scheduled for June 5, the D.C. Zoning Commission must decide three narrow zoning issues: (1) whether to waive the requirement for parking in the W-O waterfront zone; (2) whether to allow a record lot designation in the absence of street frontage; and (3) whether to grant a variance reducing the required rear lot line setback from 20 feet to 15 feet. The Zoning Commission should have no difficulty rendering favorable decisions on these issues. Eliminating parking from the site is broadly supported because it will minimize the presence of cars in the waterfront area, and the five-foot setback variance and record lot issues are nothing-burgers.

Boathouses must be built on the water, and most waterfront land in the Nation's Capital is publicly held and available for public use. The site and design of Georgetown University's boathouse will make it an asset to the community for decades to come. We urge the Zoning Commission to grant the University's request for relief so that the project can go forward.

D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2003 JUN -4 PM 3:42

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 278

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.278

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MESSAGE

Please submit ~~[illegible]~~ to the record of Z.C. Case No. 02-30, Georgetown Boathouse map amendment.

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